

**ENFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING
THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 2015**

A Special Meeting of the Enfield Town Council was called to order by Chairman Kaupin in the Enfield Room of the Enfield Town Hall, 820 Enfield Street, Enfield, Connecticut on Thursday, March 12, 2015. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

ROLL-CALL – Present were Councilors Cekala, Deni, Edgar, Kaupin, Mangini, Stokes and Szewczak. Councilor Bosco entered at 6:35 p.m., and Councilor Hall entered at 6:40 p.m. Councilors Arnone and Lee were absent. Also present were Town Manager, Matthew Coppler; Assistant Town Manager, Derrik Kennedy; Town Clerk, Suzanne Olechnicki; Director of Libraries, Henry Dutcher.

Present from the Enfield Board of Education were Vincent Grady, Timothy Neville, Raymond Peabody, Thomas Sirard, Stacy Thurston and Lori Unghire. Peter Jonaitis, Tina LeBlanc and David Wawer were absent. Also present were Superintendent, Jeffrey Schumann; Deputy Superintendent, Christopher Drezek; Chief Technology Officer, Guy Bourassa

BOARD OF EDUCATION BUDGET 2015/2016

Chairman Sirard stated Enfield has a very good school system, and he would put it up against any school system in the State. He noted six years ago, they came together as a Council and a Board with a vision and an idea. He noted they cut their overhead back as much as possible, and they dealt with mandates in an impressive way. He stated they offer really good services, and they don't spend the bank without purpose or need. He noted they're very cost efficient for what they provide. He stated they have a very good Superintendent who is not afraid to speak truth to power, nor is he afraid to get things done. He stated although they've spent some money along the way, it was money well spent.

He stated in spite of the new mandates, those mandates could have cost a lot more money than they did, and the people they hired to make it happen saved them millions of dollars. He pointed out other towns paid a lot more for the same mandates, and they should be proud of that. He noted Enfield has to compete with CREC and charter schools. He added Enfield can compete, and the Town should be proud of that.

Dr. Schumann stated their goal is to create a world class school system, and their mission is striving to inspire and develop each individual's gifts, talents and a spirit committed to life-long learning.

He stated two of their biggest expenses are payroll and accounts payable, and that is where a majority of their money goes every year. He noted they have a lot of federal and state academic mandates, and they expect teachers to be able to get students up to speed

concerning those mandates. He noted they will be taking tests that reflect those mandates.

Dr. Schumann stated their resources come primarily from three major areas. He noted the taxpayers of Enfield fund about half of their budget; the State of Connecticut funds about 43% and private and public grants fund another 6%. He stated this year they're operating the school district at just over \$68 million dollars. He acknowledged that's a lot of money, but they have a lot of work to do with that money.

He stated each year they begin the budget process by asking staff to take a reflective look at what they do and how they do it and what is needed to do it better. He noted the response was that if they had 40.3 new positions, they could offer some tremendous things for the students. For example, kindergarten paraprofessionals, which is common in a lot of districts, more high school math teachers, middle school reading teachers, computer teachers, primary computer teachers, counselors at the primary level, social workers and psychologists to handle some of the mental health issues that students are struggling with. He stated they want to continue giving students opportunities in music, performing arts and visual arts. He stated they could use Assistant Principals at the lower levels. He noted there's always a need for more special educators to help students with exceptionalities. He stated they would like to have their building and clerical staff another month out of the year, instead of having principals by themselves all summer.

Dr. Schumann stated there were some things staff asked for such as more science equipment, better instructional supplies, updated textbooks, musical instruments or athletic supplies.

He stated there are some things that they have to do in order to transition to the newly renovated high school. He noted they have a commercial culinary lab which is going to be ready for them to use in September. He noted if they combine the bands, they know they won't perform as one band until the fall of 2016, but it takes over a year to get the uniforms, therefore, if that is not done in next year's budget, they won't all be wearing the same uniform.

Dr. Schumann spoke about the budget and noted the only transition item they moved forward this year was the staffing to open the commercial culinary lab. He noted this will be a beautiful facility. He stated they have an instructor they were able to hire last year who is teaching at Fermi at this time. He noted they want to be sure that lab is used as soon as it is ready.

He referred to a pie chart showing fixed cost salaries. He noted the salaries are being negotiated with their bargaining units causing the budget to increase by \$1.3 million dollars.

Dr. Schumann stated the percentage increase being recommended by the health insurance carrier is 15%. He believes that number will come down significantly, and they cut that figure in half, which represents a 7.5% increase in the health insurance premium.

He stated they have responsibilities to their pension, disability and other non-personnel items at \$77,000. He noted the workers' compensation was originally up very high, but it has now been adjusted back to \$90,000 over the current year.

Dr. Schumann stated in special education, they have different responsibilities that are mandated to them, i.e., transportation responsibilities, out placements, etc. He noted it appears that budget will increase a half million dollars to service the needs of their special education students, which is about 13% to 14% of their total population.

He stated they continue to struggle with how to budget for magnet schools. He noted magnet school opportunities are great around the state. He stated CREC is operating 30 brand new, attractive buildings with huge budgets and they advertise on television and billboards and are attracting lots of students. He noted the issue with this is that students sign up all the way through the end of September, and the Enfield Board of Education gets a bill on October 1st, and they have no idea what that bill will be. He stated last year, they budgeted \$1.3 million dollars for magnet schools, and they were still \$250,000 short. He stated for this year, they included the \$250,000 shortage and they added another \$125,000, and it's hoped that will work. He pointed out they're working very hard with their legislators and the State Department to find a different way to know this number. He stated they have no problem with children going to magnet schools, but they'd like to know in the budget season what they should budget for.

Dr. Schumann referred to ITPC, and the Board included in their budget their total cost of \$1.4 million. He noted in the past the Town Council has been gracious enough to subsidize the Board's side of this, but that has not been determined as yet.

He stated when everything is added together, it will require that the Board's budget increase 6.99%. He stated there is no new spending or initiatives, except for the one transition piece, which is the instructor for the culinary lab.

Dr. Schumann stated the vision that Enfield had to create a STEAM wing is right on. He noted the highest paying jobs and opportunities are in the STEAM fields. He stated they are finding ways they can connect with Asnuntuck for further education. He noted Asnuntuck is working with Enfield Public Schools as early as 6th grade and teaching technology skills. He stated they are doing this because Enfield Public Schools' expectation for every child at the very least is an Associate's Degree, which could then lead to a Bachelor's Degree.

He stated the mission of the school system and the way they do their work has changed. He noted schools must now do something different by taking each individual and finding ways to enhance their individual talents. He stated students must be able to think creatively, reason systematically, work collaboratively and engage respectfully. He noted those are the skills they need in order to achieve in different ways.

Mr. Sirard stated Enfield has done some very good things. He noted Rachel's Challenge is something that's being looked at nationally. He stated there are other districts in

Connecticut looking to Enfield to see how this town implements mandates, i.e., Common Core and the teachers' evaluation system. He stated other towns look at Enfield because Enfield leads the way in a lot of different areas, and they are focusing on being and earning the title of the center of North Central Connecticut. He stated Enfield is the hub, and when the new high school is finished, Enfield will have a very attractive school system and will be able to compete with the finest school districts at a lower cost. He noted the problem is that the school system doesn't get the money. He stated it's not the Town's fault, but the State's fault. He noted the Board presents a budget that they say they need in order to maintain what they have. He stated they aren't adding anything except one culinary arts position.

Mr. Sirard stated they've come a long way since 2008 because Enfield has a good, competitive school system.

Councilor Hall questioned what changes the school system implemented this year on the positive side as concerns any programs that were added, any positions that were added, or things they were able to do that they didn't anticipate doing last year.

Mr. Sirard stated one of the biggest things they were facing had to do with the implementation of the Common Core and the teachers' evaluation system. He noted they originally proposed hiring a bunch of people in order to get these things done. He stated Anne McKernan and her staff devised a curriculum that fits the Common Core standard that actually works toward their goals and saves a lot of money when it comes to implementing some of the other things. He noted they reorganized some responsibilities within district, and there are some teachers and administrators that are doing a lot more than they were planning on doing, and they got things done.

Dr. Schumann stated they expanded the evaluation system, and this covers all of their teachers while last year it was only covering secondary teachers. He referred to the Asnuntuck Partnership Program, which isn't costing any money. He noted they have a partnership with Lego, and that program is continually expanding to several grade levels. He stated they received a grant for the JFK Innovation Lab, and that lab is up and running. He noted another program at JFK is the Sea Perch Program, which involves underwater robotics. He stated the Sea Perch team swept the state competition at all three levels the first year they competed, and they will be competing in the nationals in May at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. He stated these are a few great things happening without a lot of funding.

Councilor Hall questioned whether there was anything the school system was unable to move forward with last year. Dr. Schumann stated there was nothing they had to give up. He noted they had some ideas about expanding mental health service positions, especially at the lower levels. He stated they still believe that another administrator at the Grade 3 to Grade 5 levels would be helpful. He explained that although the Principals are doing a great job managing everything, they're really being stretched to get out in the classrooms and be instructional leaders. He noted they found an assistant to manage some of the issues that aren't necessarily academic related, but there are things that the Principals

need to be aware of and take care of. He feels Principals could be academic leaders as opposed to building managers.

Mr. Sirard stated there's always a need for paraprofessionals, social workers, psychologists and clerical. He noted unfortunately, there are higher priorities over those when money is tight. He stated they do exactly what they can to make the system work without collapsing on itself and not over-extending or over-committing themselves. He stated they're very much trying to provide the best education the Town can afford.

Councilor Hall questioned if class sizes have remained stable over the last couple years, and Dr. Schumann stated two years ago, the Board made a conscious decision to put in full-day kindergarten knowing it was going to raise class sizes, but the Board felt that was a good trade-off to offer the opportunity for a full-day kindergarten.

Councilor Hall questioned why some classrooms have more students than others, and Mr. Sirard stated they can't help geography, however, they do try to make things work.

Councilor Hall questioned whether it makes sense to have more kindergarten classes. Dr. Schumann stated his belief that doing so around the district would be cost prohibitive. He stated his belief overall the numbers are good. He noted they are aware of some class sizes that are problematic, and they try to offer some extra paraprofessional support in those rooms.

Mr. Grady stated his belief they need something for those students who are getting lost in the system. He noted some students aren't meant for college, but might be more hands on, i.e., electricians, plumbers, etc.

Mr. Peabody spoke about the Performance Plus Program, which helps teachers monitor the progress of students, and this allows teachers to jump in quicker and more effectively to provide intervention for a student. He noted this is a great investment, and Council members are welcome to stop by the Curriculum Office to see this program. He stated this program is really helping students earlier.

Councilor Cekala referred to the Board's budget book which mentions an increase to provide equipment for the consolidated high school that was not provided through the FF&E. She questioned whether this was discussed with the High School Renovation Committee. Councilor Szewczak stated they just went over the technology budget last week, and they were all under the impression that funding would be provided. Dr. Schumann stated this is not computer technology, but rather this is the technology education department, and they were looking at things in the metal shop and the auto shop. He stated his belief there's no funding for lathes, 3D printers and one of the lifts. He added his belief all the computer technology is going in FF&E, but this relates to things for John Dague's technology department.

Referring to district-wide instructional on Page 72 of the budget book, Councilor Cekala questioned the increase regarding magnet and non-public. Mr. Sirard stated they were hit

with a \$250,000 increase this year that wasn't budgeted last year, and this sent ripple effects throughout their entire budget. He noted when it comes to the CREC budget, they have to guess where they're going and what they can anticipate. He stated this year, their educated guess is \$375,000 over what they budgeted originally. He noted the school system is left in the lurch because they truly have no control over magnet schools, special education, or health insurance costs. Dr. Schumann stated the Board budgeted \$1,284,000, and they're \$250,000 short of that number this year, therefore, they added the \$250,000 and then added another \$125,000 bringing the figure to \$1,659,000.

Referring to Page 75, Employee Benefits and Transportation, the line item for non-public transportation at a cost of \$392,000, Councilor Cekala requested clarification. Mr. Sirard stated parochial school transportation is required by law.

Councilor Szewczak stated on-line textbooks have an annual fee for software licensure, but that licensure doesn't stay with textbooks, but rather it goes over to the IT budget. She noted that might help explain why the IT side of the budget keeps growing astronomically. Dr. Schumann stated he does not believe that's a major driver in that, but he would have to look at that.

Councilor Mangini questioned whether the \$90,000 for workers' compensation is an increase over the current year, and Dr. Schumann responded that's correct and stated the premium cost is increasing, and they're moving from a fully insured to a self-insured program. He noted there are some wrinkles causing that number to fluctuate until they become fully self-insured.

As concerns the \$1.4 million dollars included in the ITPC, Councilor Mangini stated if the Town decides to cover this, will that amount be backed out, and Dr. Schumann responded absolutely.

Councilor Deni questioned how many students are in CREC schools. Dr. Schumann estimated a little over 400 students attend magnet schools.

Councilor Deni stated he would like enrollments figures for each individual school. Dr. Schumann indicated that information is on their website.

Councilor Deni questioned who is doing the teacher evaluations. Dr. Schumann responded all the members of the Administrative Council, along with Central Office administrators.

Councilor Deni questioned whether it's planned for non-union administrators in the school department and other unions to go with HSA's. Dr. Schumann stated the goal is to move the entire system to HSA's.

Councilor Deni questioned the high cost of substitute teachers through Kelly Services. Dr. Schumann stated right now it appears the best way to go is to pay the premium to Kelly Services and not be on the hook for health insurance.

Councilor Cekala questioned whether there's any hope to get any guidance counselors in the K to Grade 5 schools, and Mr. Sirard responded not with this budget request.

Chairman Kaupin stated there was a CRCOG executive committee meeting on Wednesday in Hartford, and it was the impression that there's a lot of worry and concern at the Capitol, and the state's deficits are massive. He noted the Governor's budget holds municipalities harmless. He stated areas hit the hardest in the budget reductions have been higher education and social services. He noted higher education and social services have constituencies that can very easily be called out to testify in front of the legislature. He noted municipalities and boards of education can't call on a lot of people to go to Hartford and testify in front of the legislature. He stated legislators are going to have to make some difficult choices, and the pressure will be coming from the large lobbying groups. He stated the message is the Governor's budget is hold harmless, but don't bet on that, or a resolution prior to budget setting times.

Chairman Kaupin stated CRCOG had a meeting with Senator Kissel last week, and they were unanimous on issues with the magnet schools drawing people away and the funding not coming back and the cost of special education. He questioned the possibility of this happening. Mr. Neville stated where magnet schools are concerned, the Enfield Public Schools system just gets a bill, and if the student drops out of the magnet school, the magnet school gets to keep the money. He noted they don't get any notice of what that bill is going to be until after the budget is set. He stated no business could run this way. He noted that's a \$250,000 surprise, and this has an impact on Enfield students. He stated he wished the public understood just how unfair it is to the towns and school districts that are trying to provide the services, but they're just not being treated fairly. He stated his belief it doesn't take a lot to plan things so they have their numbers by May instead of October 1st.

Mr. Sirard stated he learned through conversations with the legislative team that there's no political will at the state capitol to provide mandate relief because everything looks bad politically.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION #3059 by Councilor Mangini, seconded by Councilor Szewczak to adjourn.

Upon a **SHOW-OF-HANDS** vote being taken, the Chair declared **MOTION #3059** adopted 9-0-0, and the meeting stood adjourned at 7:30 p.m.